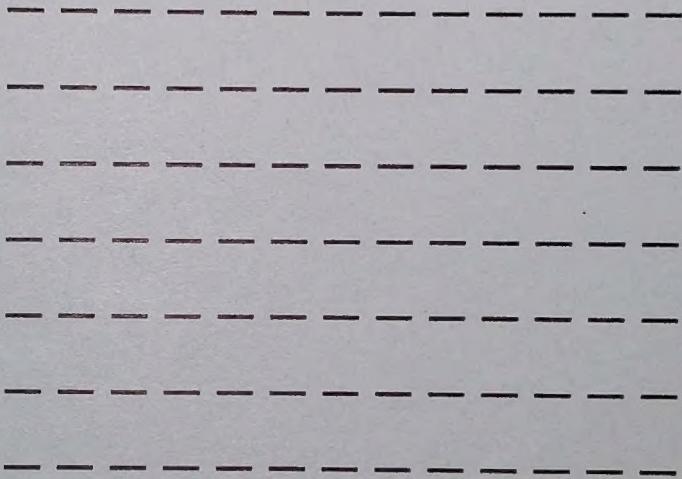


MORE PENTAGRAMS



Writings 2004-2008

Keith J. Varadi

MORE PENTAGRAMS

New Brunswick, NJ: April 2008

This book took four years to finally put together. It's a compilation of writings I've made for various reasons, whether initially as lyrics for songs or under the presumption as poems or later, simply as concrete thoughts written or typed out. Now that I am finally graduating from college next month, I thought it made for a good excuse to pull together everything I've written since I started and choose stuff that I think is still relevant to me and accurately illustrates what I've experienced since being forced to start trying to grow up. This book is meant to serve as a reflection of my idea-hopping and the attempts to make sense of it all, if possible.

-Keith J. Varadi

A Distant Rhythm

I sawed into the tool shed
To dig up some more lies.
I looked in the yard for hours,
When they were right there in your eyes.
The kitchen is full of knives.
The bedroom is full of sand.
The answering machine was playing
When you showed me your red hands.

No one seems to mind marching,
But we all hate blind parades.
The television is broken,
But we can still hear what they say.
They talk and talk and talk
Till our ears fall to the Earth—
You can't hear the clear deceit,
If your drums are full of dirt.

The magnets aren't so powerful—
This time we may not stick.
If habits are a sure sign,
You're the one who made me sick.
There's no cure for insistence
So I might as well give up.
But I can't control my intake
Even if I've had enough.

The government is taxing,
The government is tolling.
Let's keep these adverts reeling,
Let's keep them wheels rolling.
Yeah, numbers don't mean anything;
These sorts of things, they take hard work.
Values are the roots of cherry trees,
And death is the route to rebirth.

The marquee ain't so cheap these days.
Gas determines everything.
What's that pumping through your veins?
Where's your wife's engagement ring?
Compose yourself for a moment;
I can still hear a distant rhythm.
Lift your chin up from the carpet,
And shake the nose from bill position.

You say you're something else,
And you know something? You're right.
The cabinet is creaking—
It's unhinging from its fright.
Yeah, the kitchen is full of knives.
And the bedroom is full of sand.

And the answering machine was playing
When you showed me your red hands.

Ain't No Right

I broke my back; you broke the law.
You broke my spirit; I broke your heart.
Where's your knife, huh? I got my gun.
If it were warmer, they'd call it love.

All I've Got Now

If the world was an accident,
Then I must be as well.
And each accident has an origin;
A story to tell.
And if you're telling the truth,
Why won't you look me in the eyes?
If you're so self-confident,
Why can I hear your ego cry?

Well, what's the problem this time?
Yeah, what's the deal?
You've been let down again;
Just proof this life is real.
We've got to share each other's faces,
Brains, and shoelaces
To get what we want,
Where we want, if we want.

Do you think about the future?
I think you do.
I think maybe that's your problem;
Maybe mine too.
And I think maybe thinking is it altogether.
Let's think on it together,
Let's make something out of nothing,
Let's come up with something better.

And The Delta Shakes Its Head

May 1891:
The Delta began to breed.
Soon, the South would be proud
Of their singers that would sing.
And the legends, like whirlwinds
Spread north and west and east
Dropping stories in poor ears
Like Johnny dropped his seeds.

August 1938:
The devil went back on his word;
A soul ain't got no price,

The man of myths would learn.
And don't trust no woman
You can't, yourself, discern
Or you're just asking for it, son.
Bones and blood will burn.

March 1965:
It was all brought back home—
The stories of the old world
Relearned by off-dressed folk.
Half a year, hawking and hamming,
Rolling down that famous road.
An encore of ups and downs
The raspy voice made known.

April 1985:
The world had changed forever;
Take it easy, I'm not conceited.
It was a good month, a good year.
I think it changed in May as well,
And from August to December.
How were the other five?
Well, it's hard to remember.

June 2006:
I lost all my records.
Then I thought to myself,
"There are more important things than records."
You know, I could have lost something else,
Say, like my penis.
It wouldn't be surprising
Since old John S. lost his.

Backseat Air Guitar

I first got nostalgic
Way after I ever wrote
My first love song.
And I write love songs
Probably
For the same reason Dave says he writes love songs.
It's about what we don't have
And what we want.
It's about consumption
And the allure.
And that's a shame,
And not something I'd thought of
Until Air Guitar—
And Dave said it simply,
And he said it better,
Which made me jealous
And that's one feeling
I don't feel

Very often.
But he made me think
About how lately,
I have been thinking
About all the bands I listened to growing up
And all the stupid shit I did in parking lots
And at basement shows and Eat 'n Parks.
And when I think about that shit,
I don't think about that shit
The way some people think of it.
I don't think in terms of Glory Days,
And if I did,
Those certainly would not be mine.
And if I did,
I'd have bigger problems than I do.
But when I think about that shit,
I just think about how the only
Thing that mattered
Was how I was getting to the show at Roboto,
Or whose parents' booze we were stealing.
And when I listen to those records now,
I remember those bands aren't bands anymore.
And when I drink good whiskey now,
I realize I have to pay for it.
And so some nights,
I'd take back my curfew
To get back my freedom.

Beautiful Boys

I once knew the two most beautiful boys
Who lived in the most hideous city,
Aside from the ones with other beautiful people.

I once knew the two most beautiful boys
Who had squirrel cheeks and uneven bed head.
They always fought with the wind on cold days.

They're learning Japanese now, off in Japan.
I hope they still know how to say my name
The next time I see them, whenever that is.

They're learning how to eat healthy, hopefully.
I hope they are still healthy with healthy bones;
I hope their energy is still what it was before.

Bethesda, Maryland

Bethesda, Maryland:
How do I know that you exist?
I passed a sign in your name,
Traveling through the state you claim.
Maybe we'll meet someday.
But I've already hit the road

I'm still consumed by the lines.

Crosses On Her Cuticles

I've got this girl; she's got crosses on her cuticles
And her little girl voice, I tell you, it can slay
And the bottoms of her feet are beautiful
No matter what, no matter what she claims.

Dirty Days

There is something about that feeling I get
When I walk into a bedroom
And I know I'm going to be inside her.
What if I don't want to?
Maybe I don't want to.
But I'll get under the sheets anyways.

There is something about feeling sore
When she's got the most comfortable mattress.
And I'll say, "What's on the television?"
I'll kiss her face and look away.
And she'll see I'm kinda spooked.
But she'll try her luck anyways.

Double You

I've seen a lot of movies, you know—
Ones based on true stories
That move people and stuff.

I had a friend five years ago—
His heart stopped beating
When he smoked crack.

I'm for real about what I just said.
He wore multiple belts
That he bought from the mall.

I only wore one belt at a time,
But I liked Black Flag
More than the punks at the shows.

I used to be scared of circle pits.
But then I went to college,
And hardcore kids don't go to college.

We just wanna have fun, guys—
That's what I always tell the tough guys
When they try to ruin the party.

Too many people are still pissed
About something I can't figure out.

Maybe it's on Wikipedia or something

Maybe there is no right or wrong—
I couldn't tell you in my words.
But you'll surely find out when you're drunk.

Drag The Caravan

There's a bomb going off somewhere down the river.
There's a bomb going off somewhere East of Europe.
The difference is the former will be kept between lovers
And the latter will drag the caravan further.

We'll go to war if that's what we need.
We'll strive for pride or just settle for greed.
And we'll cut some taxes while the colors bleed
And we'll watch as the red, white, and blue turn to green.

Don't blame it on the borders; don't blame it on the press.
We'd rather point our fingers than just clean the mess.
If you've got all ten once you're liberated, you feel blessed.
But when you're already free, your facts are as good as my guess.

By the time you hear the news, it's already old.
And by the time you're saved, you've already lost your soul.
And if you try to buy it back, it'll already be sold.
Yeah, your mind means nothing unless it's backed by gold.

Oh, I always feel like I'm asleep even when I'm awake—
Like all the hours bleed together; there's no morning, no day.
And if I can't seem to snap out of it, just give me a shake
Cause living just by breathing is our biggest mistake.

East Of The River

There was a time when I was just footsteps away—
I could climb on up if I heard your name
And reach over your handles for another pillow
And look into your eyes if we were out of windows.
But now I'm East of the River
And wishing you were here or nearer.

That one day, you asked me if I knew what love is for—
I said I wasn't so sure; I swore I'd never been before
And with one hand on your hip, the other on your eye
You yelled at my back, "I don't know why I bother sometimes!"
And that's why I'm East of the River
But I still wish you were here or nearer.

Egalitarian Blues

The churchyard bells ring like New Year's Eve
While my cup of coffee blows off steam,
The car radios make a mess of the Middle East

And the two-toned suits sting like rotten tangerines
And the nuns in the lot ask for wine and mercy.

The sources and resources are surely being used up.
The sedans and wetlands are boiling feuds up.
Don't wait another moment for the prophets to cue up.
Books of betrayal don't do nothing to root up.
Till the end of our days, the colored folks sing, "Hallelujah!"

Left, near the launders, is a stoop for smoking
Cigarettes to bum or money to throw in;
Don't lie about your night cause they already know about it.
If you're looking for some might, you better not blow it.
Cause the corpses by the mart ain't crying, they're crowing.

I see six wool caps blowing with the leaves—
They're sitting on their needles, swinging from their sleeves;
Must have been dropped by their mothers or fallen from the trees.
Got nothing concrete, just false robes and creeds.
I don't see power doing nothing, but praying on its knees.

False Attitudes

You were born a good child; we all were.
But what about those who believe otherwise?
You must lead yourself to the mountain—
I will wait with your basket and new set of eyes.

Don't be so complacent—it shows you're a bust.
What's with your fear of leaving lovers early?
You clipped yourself always, since you think you must.
And let me ask you: how do you know when is too early?

Well, architects know nothing about wax or roots
But they convince us they know something.
And forked tongues are as dull as silver spoons;
That's why they make such good company.

And so think back on when you were a child
And whether or not you have grown as you'd like;
To when your father says your hardships were mild,
I say that's for you and for you only to decide.

Fiat Hills

By the time you start thinking
About the year that has passed,
I'll be floating through the hallways
Like milk swims through the trash.
And the clouds always hang high
Outside of the structures
And the sky's still blue;
Forget all other colors.

I am speechless
For the first time;
I can't feel my lungs—
They are tied with my tongue.
My feet are paved,
And my head is wrung.
I'd be lying if I said
I was fine.

The nights that follow
Are like desserts to the day.
We both try to forget
The destruction that we crave
And we climb up the hills
That lay so flat
And we sleep on their sides
Under armpits of grass.

I am speechless
For the first time;
I can't feel my lungs—
They are tied with my tongue.
My feet are paved,
And my head is wrung.
I'd be lying if I said
I was fine.

If I stray just a blade,
Don't tear down the center.
I didn't mean nothing;
Your scent still smells better.
A river divides us
And miles between
But the train rides home
Keep you close to me.

I am speechless
For the first time;
I can't feel my lungs—
They are tied with my tongue.
My feet are paved,
And my head is wrung.
I'd be lying if I said
I was fine.

Fractured Faith

I'm sorry if the words I offered
Weren't the ones you wanted.
Why do you ever ask anyways?
Proof my lips should never separate.

Fill up on the bad news

In case the good comes too late;
I'm going back into hiding
The nighttime is too blinding.

The moon is your Jesus—
He'll cut those so fleeting.
Don't stick to the pages;
No, they're not what they're labeled.

So I guess it goes like this:
No one cares unless you prove it.
Lie if that's what you gotta do,
There's no truth like no truth.

Free The Mules

Memory is a funny thing
We forget about from time to time
Salmon are startling
To know what is to be alive.

We float through days
Like porcelain legs, owing someone fuel,
Breaking China plates
And plasticware, just to free the mules.

The neverlands are in our hands
Or just beyond our reach;
Sofa beds and sugarheads:
Let's cough ourselves to sleep.

Dream a dream of sandpaper
Stone faces and suspended blades
Sweaty palms are icebreakers
To calm us before we wake.

Gasp for breath or else you're dead
And the feathers will drench your chest.
Swipe your eyes; know what you said,
Or else you'll think you get what you get.

The sun is up; the streets are tired,
The walls are vices or temples
Open the door to hear the liars;
You see, sinning is so simple.

Purity is coffin wood
And termites against the grain
Surrender with common bliss
And know not who or what to blame.

Cassettes of finger pointing
And melodies before the blast
Rolling backs and singer sorting

Looking for some more laughs.

Sing along to unknown words.
Traveling is a mystery;
The start and stop becomes a blur.
Everything is in repeat.

Yeah, memory is a funny thing
We forget from time to time
You know, it's frightening
Not to know how you're gonna die.

Fuck Math

I was wrong about being right
But you were just looking for someone to fight.
I spent too much time at the Cage tonight.
If I called you drunk earlier, don't mind—
Yeah, disregard what I said; I lied.
Okay, if you claim your mistakes,
Well then, I'll surely claim mine.
All right?

Everything in this life is a disappointment
So stop concerning yourself with what you're gonna get.
I've got no more money to spend on your cigarettes
And daydreaming won't rid you of your debts
So wake up and forget about your regrets
If you ever come back down from that fever
You'll realize you were blind and now, you have nothing left.
Get out of bed.

Every time I think I have something figured out.
I always end up realizing I'm an asshole.
There's no more room in my brain for problems—
I have no manual or machine to check them.
Somehow, I've lost my struggle with logic,
Which is sort of strange when I think about it
Cause I always liked shapes better than equations.
Fuck math.

Future Fevers

No idols any longer
No bold faces either
No voices to be heard.
Talk to someone's eyes;
Or don't talk at all.

The minds of the mad
Are the last to be read,
But if we are to survive,
I think we ought to start
By opening a book or two.

My one ear is awful
And my other is bored.
What's wrong with print,
And those drab assholes
And their anorexic words?

Few ever get to the point.
I'm long-winded, myself
But all my favorite people
Put on like that too—
It's called attention to detail.

I was thinking about death
And my youthful bravery
And my flinty efforts of avoidance;
I'm not afraid, so I say
What else can I claim?

Bad girls are none of my concern.
Bad guys are for the trash men.
Don't tell me to do anything—
I'm watching Law and Order
Special Victims Unit.

Hand Crossed Holler

My eyes align as the cigarette's lit,
And my take home girl just rolls with it.
The gurney wheels come loose too quick
As I slip into her graveyard grip.

Whispered horses on a page
Clap their clogs on the bricks we laid.
Walk me back to from where we came
So I can quit for good and love her plain.

Hands Above

When your rib cage fails you
It'll be okay, I swear.
Your bones are merely bones,
But tears are more than tears.

You are beyond pleasing.
Your collar is clear.
I cannot stand to lose you
Or have your values smeared.

Let your fingertips go free
It's another new year
Our trials have no limits
With our future so unclear.

I mean, can't you let me love you?

You don't have to share.
I only have what I have offered
And I think that's more than fair.

Heaven or Heaven

Why can't I marry a Jew?
I mean, why I can't I if that's what I choose?
Why can't I love a lawyer?
I mean, not all arguments warrant the blues.

What's with the hangman heretic
Who hollers for salvation and respect
Who hears the echoes of empires
Divulging the tragedy of modern epithets?

The future ain't always forward.
Directions can't define what we hope for
But if you wanna get somewhere,
You'd better have handy that leaden lore.

What have you known all this time?
Am I the only one who has seen you cry?
I got a picture that will make you laugh
And live on for infinity or something like that.

There are two rooms of equal laziness—
I'd like to share either with your kindness
And taste the color of your skin
And think airy thoughts about your existence.

I want Heaven or Heaven after this life,
I wanna fingerpick with Jesus Christ,
I wanna love like the sun comes up,
But most of all, I wanna die with a wife.

I Said, "Let's Talk Thursday"

She doesn't think I know
How it feels to be alone.
She doesn't think I know
What it means to be a man.
It's not that at all;
It's just I only suffer best
When I've had too many
And am making new mistakes.

She doesn't think I got it bad,
Cause I still eat and sleep;
Thing is, I was never good
At those things and plus,
I've got a hard time breathing
And holding on and dealing

With things outside myself.
She doesn't get it, at all.

Icebergs

Barely been out of town,
And you're always coming back
To your sanctimony and sheets
And your pipe bomb dreams.

Never believe it;
Never believe what you're thinking.
It's never what you thought.
And you'll soon realize

You can't find choice
When you're on your own, mostly.
I've had enough with women
And now I'm on my own, mostly.

It's about time for free time.
I ought to go and freeze deep,
Fill my lungs with bloody tar
And watch the icebergs sink.

If You Say So Blues

Now I'm watching neuroses somersault
In an apartment nicer than my own.
I'm drinking browns before we bolt
In the center with some other white crows,
And my brother is in short sleeves.
I'm used to covered arms,
As I'm sure he is too.
The couriers come at dusk
To deliver us into alarm;
Never before seen futures
Told alongside my faults;
There are no more empty seats,
No more common creeds;
Just a lick of desperation,
A sense of isolation,
A song I wrote upstairs
Called my if you say so blues.

In The Wilderness, It Shall Be Found

I listen to the woods
And the words that come out
And the inflation of some hope
That has yet to be found

I might die someday soon—

That's what the newspaper said.
But I knew that already—
The trees said the same thing.

Last week, I saw a man speak:
Too much structure in the room;
Deflating curiosity is cruel, cruel, cruel.
Fuck the mouth, but not too soon

And forget those who simply nod;
Do not dispose, do not deflate;
If you see your reflection's core,
Learn how to separate.

Go to the woods, man.

Iron Organs

I had a pain in my left pocket—
I could not know what had caused it;
The corners of the court
Never made it for support,
But that's to be expected.

I wanted to know all that you knew
About the fragile and the few
Who had fled the feared exposure
And came out, limping over
But not without a price tag.

Now I'm full of faith and fragility;
I cannot maintain any symmetry.
I guess that's desired for the eyes,
But words are golden; organs, iron.
Oh, you should already know that.

So I hide in your heavy heart—
It's still not too heavy to part,
And I predicate the future I'm leaving.
I estimate all the numbers needed
But I forgot the control.

And all the women who said before
That they had some alternative cure—
Well, they were surely kidding themselves.
But who was I to say how I felt?
Well, sometimes we gotta split.

And sometimes we gotta be who we are
And pick leaves or destroy our cars
Or open jars for weaker wrists
Just to know how it is we exist—
We're all fucked the same.

Jewels For One Dress

I've never cut myself shaving
And for that, I am thankful.
I am golden in some regions;
I am charcoal in other areas.
I tell tales of old times
When I feel they are exemplary
And when I am in search of
The nests that have been broken,
I call on my closest friends
To hand over what we've opened.
The rings and gloves I've found
Are my girl's to be given—
Her fingers are antennas
And my spirit is to be arisen.
I'm going to the capillary,
Direct and non-stop.
I got the senses of a slave—
I know where to get off.
When I meet her out West,
She'll know it in her jaw.
I'll make you all realize
What it is to know your own laws.
So give me one statesman
Who has lived better than you.
That's what I am saying, man—
Do what you know to do
What's with wisdom these days?
Post this and that and disregard
Of the things we all once cherished.
I often tend to digress, yes
But it's rare for me to regress
So let me go back to my point:
My jewels are for only one dress.

Just Us, Alone

Sound strikes me, simply.
The ground, the ground
Is full of sounds.

I believe we are all Holy—
I hear it in us all now,
When we aren't so loud.

Blessed are the hobos
Who have no one;
But I have you, now.

I will sing you songs
In secret, in our home
When it is just us, alone.

Learn To Learn How

When I approach the weeping house in the county east of mine,
I play the songs I've been writing, but instead choose to hide.
And when I feel roofs rattle above me, even just slightly
I wonder what it is to lack a home to call nightly.

When I sit in rooms full of windows, but no doors,
I think about my days and wonder about remorse,
And how so few people ever feel anything at all
Let alone apologize for not returning a call.

When I think about how lives are wasted just like food,
I search for the knob to turn on a different mood
But the rain can always find a crack to seep through
And the sun will taunt you further if you need the blues.

When I dread the blaring beast near my cup full of pens,
I rise from my grave like the virgin from her garden.
There is nowhere like the "Right Here, Right Now"—
It is the single perfect spark when we learn to learn how

And when I leave my presence and go on to lose my steps,
I realize I pluralize common phrases I thought I left.
And I look toward the dreams that I'm told are so bold
But I figure if you only sleep, your sensations are just tools.

When I see once brave men lying lonely in wet gutters,
I think how they probably think they failed their troubled mothers
And I give them what the cashier gave me back that morning
And I hope they know in my eyes, they're more than worthy.

Lies And More Lies

So often, you say you're sorry;
So rarely, are you who you say you are.
Too bad you're busy getting good
Cause I'd be more than willing to start
And I wanna be rid of the heart's stealing
By the streaks of a sad song's healing.

And when you say, "I've got my reasons,
To second guess sometimes,
It's just all I know so far is lies and more lies"
I say, "Your skull must be rolling down the road,
Cause you've lost your mind.
And this lie's not new, trust me, you'll be fine."

Spit up those swallowed sentences
So I can understand what's next.
Digest your own ideas
Or you'll believe in all the shit that's said.

I wanna stumble with your salty words,
But I wanna know the reason first.

Life Lives Without Me

I don't think there is a cure for cruelty
And I believe in endless chances
But even I need rest, sometimes.

I was sleepy and stoned again—
I was thinking about my ex-lover
And how life lives without me.

Where does she go when she's sad?
What is her favorite parking lot to loiter in?
How many times does she say fuck in one day?

Like A Prophet

Like a prophet, you could sense what I didn't want.
Later, I'd find you had put mercury in my cup.
I threw a fit; I threw a book;
I rented some rope, but I didn't cut.

With great accuracy, you spoke your mind.
I used some literary device to speak mine.
I took my time, I took your tongue;
I lifted the presence from your pure crime.

I won't lie—I heard what you've become.
I can't lie; as my face, it cannot run.
I fear like fire; I fear nothing at all.
I flee the present for something unknown.

By the beach, they ride on motorbikes
On the hill, they fund what all men hide.
I learned a lesson; I learned a lot.
I gave a nickel to the man who stole my dime.

Love Letter Blues

A blazer filled with crushed tobacco,
A teacup emptied of its royal packets,
A signature signed to some free work,
And a waving hand left to be blurred.

I'm leaving you for the Keystone trees—
Remember to call from across the sea.
I want you to keep me with your clothes
And to send me letters of highs and lows.

Love letter blues and the songs I have used
To know where I am and to live without you.

My stained teeth will shine like bronze
When we meet in Maryland as the owls yawn,
And the fruit colored skies rise like children
In the morning before their bones are ruined

Sometimes I speak of things partially known
But with each day, my knowledge keeps growing.
And there's one thing and I'm sure I'm certain—
It's that you're nothing if you're not in person.

Love letter blues and the songs I have used
To know where I am and to live without you.

Me And Mechelle

Sipping on Straubs
And melting faces—
I am hopeful tonight.
Do you hear them?
The Metallica heartbeats
In the corners;
Kill 'Em All.

Mechanics, Lovely

I felt them in my pockets' patterns;
I heard them on the carpet, laughing—
Good vibrations for weeks, no months.
After the absence had passed my self or soul,
I stood there in the candy alley
Of the transport command center—
The drones passed, one by one
And I knew as all the needles dropped,
Commercials are in demand;
Let's not kid ourselves
But Larry King was in the middle
Of revelations across the switching boards.

My cell phone was entertaining
A tune it knew a while—
It was a familiar voice I heard, of course
But I was hoping it was yours instead.
I wanted to find forgiveness
Or substance to the sinking
Of something that smelled so solid
When I met you in that coffee shop.
And I still smell the brewing
Of beans and bravery.
But you're already on your way back home
And there's nothing we can save no more.

The frigid faces remind me of
The confusion of that November day;

I was staring at some computer screen
When I was awakened from my dream.
And you made propositions
To renew what we had once known
Or what we thought we maybe had.
But you never think, so I say you are a man.
Yeah, well, when I'm desperate,
I'll offer the best of my intentions
Without listening to your fruitless future
Cause I already know your wretched past.

And when you're carefree, or even cheap,
You'll accept what you're given
Without reading the fine print
Or saving it on a diskette.
Some people will almost always do
Just about anything for an escape,
A rescue from what they've raped
And left for the vultures in the valley
Wine tasting is for assholes
And sushi is fine served buffet style.
Isolation is so much better
When you can breathe it all alone.

The echoes of the midnight spoons
Stir and spin my head in squares
And bend them into forks and knives
To cut your lies to swallow better.
I tasted my fingers on your face
When you asked me to better know your freckles—
The ones that aren't so visible,
When you're hiding in the shower.
The coast is so much colder
When the cause licks with your tongue.
The tide is better foreplay
Than the moon allows it to show.

I miss the post-sunshine glitter
The sidewalk never costumes.
I miss the previewed parlance
The maniacs always mutter
You ruined the boulevard
With your sharpened stiletto heels,
Pulled back and palled down
To the heart of its existence.
You danced like all our beer was gone—
The bottles were just fooling you.
The fridge was laughing like a boar
And the lampshades barreled too

You rattled like the baby's limo
That's parked beside me now.
I'm at a loss to what I've learned from you

And your miseries and last credits.
I wish you'd kept your mysteries
In the Midwest for whoever cared.
I want to forget those electronics
That you read me into method.
I wish you'd never intruded;
I wish I could have avoided
Your flirting with the ghosts
I thought I left north of Manhattan.

I take that back; I lied like you.
I need your pictures to be real—
They're fading like the history
Of humans from their books;
I read the one I bought you last year.
Since you thanked my lips so fully,
The muzzle on the mantelpiece
Contained the room's applause for me.
Late Nite's like navigation—
Latitudes and longitudes,
Gratitude for what I knew
To be the end of our tenure.

The solemn stills of halted gills
As we breathed our last goodbyes—
You refused to speak what bundled up
Inside your belly's cornered cave.
The bats are always belting something jazzy out,
But you only wanna hear the blues.
The martyrs have all been stoned or boozed
And I'm too proud to touch a number.
So drive to the park where we slept in summer,
Tie yourself in sheets of slumber,
And think of the escalator's message,
And I'll sit in the cornered cave for days.

Motionless

There's a broken collarbone
In the fucking living room—
I don't know where it came from,
I don't know where it came from;
I don't.

I hold a mended fishing rod;
How much tree is in your pocket?
Can you really see me?
Can you really see me?
Can you?

I will speak in the native tongue,
But we will breathe in foreign blood.
And we will hold hands, clap, reason,

Think twice, and define reason.

I will stay put
If you cross the line.
Hell, we're all motionless;
Everything moves in time.

There's a tugging seamstress
Out sewing upstream, yes—
Will she meet her destination?
Will she meet her destination?
Will she?

There's a napping Nazi Nancy
Off conquering dreams he passed—
This is defied malignancy,
This is defied malignancy;
It is.

I will speak in the native tongue,
But we will breathe in foreign blood
And we will hold hands, clap, reason,
Think twice, and define reason.

I will stay put
If you cross the line.
Hell, we're all motionless;
Everything moves in time.

There's a sprawled out afghan
Covering your shattered hands—
You always got the best secrets,
You always got the best secrets,
You do.

I'm in a white room now
The collaged floor is so nauseating—
One day, the Earth will stop spinning,
One day, the Earth will stop spinning;
It will.

I will speak in the native tongue,
But we will breathe in foreign blood,
And we will hold hands, clap, reason;
Think twice, and define reason.

I will stay put
If you cross the line.
Hell, we're all motionless;
Everything moves in time.

Number Four, Sadly

Why is it that I wrote four sad songs tonight?
I have written plenty of songs in my life, too many to count—
Why is it that they're all full of sadness tonight?
I think it's cause I have a life to live, which I know nothing about—
And that's sad.

Why is it that everyone I meet is full of lies?
My family never lied to me, but everyone else has at least once.
Why is it that I refuse to give up on the liars?
I think it's cause I wanna know that there is some good to come—
And that's sad.

Why are there such things as one-way streets?
I think that every car should have to pass other cars, always.
Why aren't there one-way halls or paths for people?
I think that it'd be impossible to find a friend or lover that way—
And that's sad.

Odd Years Are Always The Worst

Go home if you're not welcome—
That's one thing I heard
If you're scared of the coasts.
Stay put, don't return;
But that's useless advice, I'm pretty sure
If you're scared of the Bible and Country Western too.

I guess I'm gonna try to make it past the waiting room—
All these magazines have stains on them.
I guess I'm gonna go home or somewhere familiar;
I guess I'm gonna go if I ever find it;
I guess I'm gonna go.

If there's a hood at the table,
I'm gonna stay sown up.
If there's a nut on the floor,
I'm not gonna pick it up.
What's that people say about lessons?
I must have been too tired or young or something.

Has anybody ever dealt with it?
It's like when the grease leaks
And grumpy dudes freak
And Texans run you off the road
And racist hippies talk about UFOs
And Republicans put on their faces
While Italian doctors try desperately to wreck yours
And there is nothing you can do about it.

If I could just grow a beard and hide for some time, I would.

Our Age Is A Good Age

Here comes the beggar now—
He knows not how to be subtle.
If more of us gave a dime,
Perhaps, we too would be humble.
And there's the catcaller—
I feel sad for his mother,
And how his father cried,
And took bed with another.

But don't think twice even once!

I will love you
Like you ought to be loved.

I saw a tornado special today
On the Discovery Channel—
It reminded me of you,
How you never stand still.
We can be cowards like cowboys
Or we can make love like we care.
I am fortunate to even feel
When words are stolen by air.

I will love you
Like you ought to be loved.

Forget about the assholes,
And don't listen to the puntans
And the gospel of the gossipers—
I don't want to hear any more of it.
And I know you're with me on this;
Don't think I'd ever leave you, ever.
Give me your left hand, please.
I said give me your left hand, please.

I will love you
Like you ought to be loved.

Piss Alley Talk

Lost somewhere in our new town:
We're breaking bottles in the parking lot
Cause we've forgotten why we're scared;
And anyways, we got the Hold Steady on.

Who cares how you fuck yourself up
Unless you fuck over the ones you fuck—
Isn't that how it goes when you're bored?
I realized this shit last year, piss drunk.

And you know what?

You can do what you want these days;
You can get away with all kinds of shit;
You can do what you want these days—
When you're young, it don't matter a bit!

Don't go to the Seven Eleven, man,
Until the hour hand is double digits—
It's not worth it till the hookers are out,
That's where it's best to howl with them.

On second thought, just drive by every time
Find yourself an all-ages fire hall show
Get nostalgic and realize it was a bad idea too.
Just listen to Nothing Feels Good and float.

Protect With Guise

If I believed it could work, I'd pray for nicer folks.
You know you don't know what it is to know.
And the silver strings sound peculiar
And the devilish deeds feel familiar—
But that's the way the saints intended
And the hands you hold are those they'd defended.

Far off in those fields is where love is made;
That's not to say that's where lovers lay,
But the birthplace of belief of such stirrings—
Haven't you seen the films or read the stories?
The talking heads must have burned them
As they sang their lone song in silence.

Foolishness is a disease with no cure
And right now, the world looks sicker than ever
But the men on the porches shake their heads—
They ask, "What do you know about life, kid?"
And I know enough not to answer the wise;
I mean, sometimes you must protect with guise.

Rain Down Your Fire On Me When I'm Ready

"There is no God, no God any longer—
He hid His face a good while back."
Those were the paraphrased words of the touring band;
They came from up North where the sky is black.
I dropped a can on the floor and it died,
But it was cool—I still had half of the six pack.

Upstairs, there was a kid in military clothes—
He had the weirdest shape I'd ever seen;
He had a gut like a plum, but limbs like mine;
Dirt on his hands and knees, teeth so clean;
His words were fiercer than any war before,
But the room could have used some diplomacy.

Which brought to mind:

I forgot for a while how much I like folk songs.
"Why don't folk songs have riffs in them?"
I thought during that Godless band's set
I write folk songs like folks songs are written
But how can I write folk songs with riffs?
And I thought is there a God or has He really left?

I wanna see a fig tree in America;
I wanna be what I said I was gonna be;
I wanna get all of my sins out of the way;
I wanna learn the true worth of my misery;
I wanna figure out the apocalypse
So I can warn all of my friends' families
And then we'll all die together, in a circle
And we'll take in each other
Between breaths, between blinks.

Ring Still

I wonder what it matters
To those without food
If we can or can't remember
What we learned too soon.

If your love was for none,
If you had a dollar to spare,
Would you give up your blood?
Would you spend it or share?

I regret my decisions before;
What does decade two say?
I regret my regrets and more,
But I will never walk away.

Rings Of Smoke

I broke a king's back just this evening,
It was unintentional, but still convenient
So I'll kindly express my sorrows
But I'll rest my apologies for tomorrow.

The deputies of malcontent
Are holding phantom parties for contempt
And the horses are keenly marching
While the two rivers stay departing.

Letters keep flowing fast and for sure,
Disconnecting for the books to store.
I'll make my case when the end is near,
But the words I write never come out clear.

Save Your Wrists

You know it's not like me
To bring up bad memories.
Do you know what it's like
To have nothing to live for?
I'm not sure, myself
But I could find out if I wanted.
I'll search through bedroom boxes
To find my Metallica cassettes
To bring to the apartment.
And when I strum above the neighbors,
I will think about your new love
Or if you even have one
And if you'll come visit
Remember, save your wrists.

I'll sing songs for you
About animals and explosions
And hearts that fade in Laundromats.
Problems stay in cabinets;
Therapists, they know best—
Go ahead, ask your parents,
And tell them I said hi
If you get a second or a minute,
Or if you can talk for a while,
Ask how they know about the accident.
It's not true what they heard
If they heard anything at all;
What you hear is here say
And here say is per se.

Silent cats breed Balthus babies
While dusty ones rest till Christmas time.
Siamese smile with a Cheshire glow
And we break our shins in blacklisted snow.
I say we let the skeptics and poets remain.
We'll cross our arms as they take the reigns
And stare out into the shetland planes
And cover the magazines with corduroy faces—
They're different if you make them.
If you want them, if you love them.
The corporations are banking on it
And the banks are incorporating.
Have you seen the headlines?
I know; shit's depressing lately.

I was standing on the lawn
When I thought of words that worked
And I thought I thought of some more
That would shake them all for sure
But the litter spat a storm of sources
To expedite all the sores;

Cankers are a friendly bunch—
They never feel remorse.
And the real motherfuckers
Are the ones who tell you to search.
The folks who got your back
Are the ones who seem like jerks
Turn yourself around, I swear,
And you'll see the way things work.

Speech In Steps

There's not a girl who knows
What it is to sing true
Unless she's on her own.
But alone, she cannot prove
She'll hold a hand if cut,
Mend the cut if it streams,
Drink the blood as it comes,
Give the hand what it needs.

There's no words to stain
The laces that made sense
Of the actions we trade
For promises we neglect
Or for the vessels all filled
With stuff we couldn't mull.
I forgive for I have killed
The favors that once lulled.

Well, if there is a girl who sings
Like she has something to believe,
I have found her now that I am free,
And I have seen what she sees,
And I hear bells when I sleep,
I smell the waste of the world,
I feel damp ground under my feet.
My fingers form shapes so bold.

The Centered Nothing

The marching moments of after hours are
Woody Allen dialogues concealed inside our satchels.
We haunt ourselves into submission
With metaphors and possibilities
And turn our backs to whatever truths we claim.

You know exactly what I mean
When I say you're all full of shit (or luck).
You is universal in this universe of dichotomies.
The planets are always traveling
And we're never permanent.

Feed the tentative as you'd feed a peaking head.

The not so distant present is allergic to excitement.
Holler when you hear rotted taste bud gulps
And the lunatics with beef jerky teeth
Will lecture on salvation, of course.

Communism and American graffiti
Are art forms to embrace or hate,
But they lack the grapefruit currency
To matter much outside the walls of bounded books
Or bricked-up buildings that decide on documents.

Gluttony will slice if you want it to,
But that depends on where you stand—
Are you willing to push yourself?
Shiny is always better, they like to say.
But the dullest moments are never forgotten.

The First Time

I remember the first time
We talked instead of joked—
Well, a truth is a truth, you know?
Everything became funnier then,
With adhesive eyes for lightning strikes,
If you remember clearly.

What did you know when I
First asked you to cut my hair—
Hey, an excuse is an excuse, you know?
But we were heading to Jersey soon—
There was truth and trouble on the trail,
If you remember correctly.

The twangs of the dual guitars
And the howling of the Transcendental voice
Were banging on your ear drums,
Competing with my tall tales
You always look at me when you listen
With your bursting aqua eyes.

Pavement is for traveling, and listening too.
You don't need to be a scholar
To know about beltways or the blues;
Road maps are enough to get by,
And rest stops are for getting high.
Don't you always chew like you mean it?

When the third wheel died on us,
Only to free us from accident,
You told me your truths.
We weren't always so lucky—
There was that time with the chopsticks—
You said you'd never wish a plot twist.

Some say art imitates itself;
Logic says it's the other way around.
But that's chicken and the egg stuff.
I know you're neutral; you think it's futile
To retrace lines already drawn,
Or to paint that face you've always known.

I can be too forward for some skulls.
There was a hard rain spitting
On some pavement for the first time;
You grabbed my arm on Forward—
I guess that was pretty bold of you—
Hey, maybe pavement's for spitting too.

The Hand Of A Woman

Troubled months blame difficult days
For the blips in the calendars where they magnify mistakes.
Place an X on any box
You think you might save
For that hole to trap your fox.
Just remember precious fate—
It'll say, "Where you going without grace?"

Momings are cures for aches from the night before;
Nothing about champions will help when you're this sore.
Eggs and a bottle of Bud
I'll prescribe with confidence—
Hey, did you have fun
When you slid between his doors?
You'll say, "Is that what you're looking for?"

Shit breaks down every single man, I know.
But the hand of a woman can heal just about any blow.
Rub your hand against his face
Just to let him know
You'd rather stick around any day
Than unseat yourself and go. Just say, "I love to love you so."

The Other Way

Look the other way.
The clock just told another lie;
The pen just took another life;
The sun just stole another night;
Look the other way.

Look the other way.
I got gunpowder in my teeth;
I got the wrong faith in my feet;
I got too many people to leave;
Look the other way.

There Is A Path

When I threw those rocks at the lake,
The water skimmed its skin
And I tripped on something else.
I couldn't have known what I had felt;
And the sparrow spun its head,
The snake spat his gossip,
Filled the friendlies full of fear,
And you know, I wasn't any exception.
I pull out my pen to peel
All that has collected,
Discard all that is unreal,
And mash-up what I had messed with—
I need you now or else I'm damned.

Those Paper Scissor Figures

I don't know where I've been;
I'm not sure where I'm going.
I miss your face, your pork, your laugh,
The words you wouldn't let me take back.
Yours pass like shards in the air,
Like bullets that slice the air, so thin.
Every instance reminds me of your stability—
It still escapes me; you are a mystery.

What's with your morning euphemisms?
You know I could never quite figure them out.
The deal's not broken; it's still sealed—
The letter of proof is still waiting to get mailed;
It's in the pile atop the project
I've been working on it with the children—
I cut the paper into some sturdy shapes,
All holding tight like Southern States.

I've wrapped arms around something certain—
Something I've never mentioned before.
It's all encoded in the density of your form,
Or the shallow motives of the starts and stops.
Don't utter another thought, okay?
Cause I've already heard you say it.
These things aren't as fragile as you think;
They just need tightened or nervosa leaks.

To Know Enough Not To Understand

I'm sitting, listening to records with Dave,
Thinking about all my love mistakes.
But if there's one I appreciate most,
It's the seventh time I learned to let go.

I lost the vision I once had learned—

It went with all the regrets I had stirred.
And so I've learned to watch my vegetables—
They cause more trouble than you'd ever know.

So for those of you who wanna grow old with me,
You're welcome in the palms of my hands.
For those of you who cannot stand on bended knees,
You know enough not to understand.

Two Left Shoes

With a nap and a sack,
I carry all the dreams
That I choose to keep.
I'd rather memories leave.

No, that's not so true;
But I refuse to lie.
There's pigment in the moon;
There is a hunt tonight.

No, there won't be none
I will paint with strength.
I have tied things up;
I will keep it more than vague.

There is fun to be freed.
I have learned it well—
If you bury your deeds,
They will come back still.

So if you're shunned like shrubs,
Sprout till you cast shadows,
Cause those who cast more than that
Are suspect to be failures.

But only one can judge success—
Is that you or is it who?
Just know if you roll, roll deep;
Otherwise, it's two left shoes.

Up The Interstate Some

Whitewashed walls
Where we hide our dreams.
Whitewashed linens
Where our black bones sleep.
The dust's been on the floors
Since Nineteen Ninety-Three.
The rust stays on the fences
To remind us we're not free.
I can smell the grass blades humming,
Covered in gasoline.

The boys down the hall
Got matches for their tree.

Let's light this fucker up
Just to see those bastards weep.
Loyalty ain't nothing
When deception rots the teeth.
And communities can burn down
When one person feels the heat.
Electric tape in rolls
To wrap the ones they got;
Lists of names by doors
Of the ones that they forgot.
If you take it like a man,
They'll give you what you bought.

If you cower in the corner,
They'll tell you to get lost.
There's no winning in the jungle—
You're a pussy, dog, or fox;
There's no thinking in the storm
The wind will steal all your thoughts.
Some may call their saviors,
Some still call their moms,
But as our backs bleed and blister,
Our elders throw down shots.
I say we torch their rooms tonight
And watch them fight like we fought.

Valleys Are Tricky

Valleys are tricky, I learned in just one week.
Voices are only static when they're forced not to speak,
And the best way to listen is to look away half of the time—
It forces the storyteller to tell the story right.

Why do we always fight to be heard
When all we want is to be held?
Why do we always write things out
If we don't even know how to spell?

Just say what you want; I promise not to judge.
I promise, I promise I won't—
But if I walk away for a moment or longer,
Just know to leave me alone.

It's rare to find a person who knows the rules—
If you do, you refuse to be fooled.
Shame is the worst prescription; not lithium, not fiction.
I knew a man who did, but he broke them with his diction.

I met the deadpan man at the In 'n Out;
It appeared to be more like a Lost 'n Found.
I was sitting by myself, which usually means I want to

But I didn't mind his company, not with a full moon.

He eyed my plastic cup with a four-eyed focus,
Examined with his fingers and asked its contents.
He said doctors don't know nothing about spices.
I concurred with confusion and he muttered some crisis.

He said, "Son, pretty girls make shitty wives,
Why do you think I've been married twice?"
I shrugged my shoulders since my girl's is gorgeous;
He crossed his fingers, said, "Maybe things will look up."

He asked, "Do you know why the strip shines at sunset?"
I said, "Sir, it's midnight. What are you getting at?"
He said he was aging and that is how grandfathers joke.
I asked him about his grandkids; he said he had none of his own.

"New balance with new shoes give you comfort at noon.
My medications help me not to forget when is too soon."
I'm not quite sure what he meant, but with that he up and left.
These days, that's how most of my conversations are spent.

Walk On

Well, the orphan and the widow
Got something to say.
Both had a dollar,
But they threw it away.
If they had ten more,
They'd do it the same.
If the orphan and the widow had one,
They'd lose their names.

Walk on, walk on till you see the sun.
The moon will hunt if you start to run.
Let the breeze take your knees
And let go of disease.

We Can Last Forever

We can break bread with hands held, fingers crossed so tight.
We can drink the wine like blood if there is only one light.
But you might as well be blind if your eyes are gonna stay shut.

We know nothing that is greater than the next person claims.
We each have our moments that make us more than certain names.
But if there is only one truth, suicide would not be taboo.

We all benefit from the crude work of other jealous people.
We all end by sharp objects like knives or love or needles.
But with each ending comes another ending, not like in that fiction stuff.

We can last forever like legends if we so desire.

We can die with smiles on our faces when we die,
But there's no point in dying if you're only to be forgotten.

What's Your Favorite Song?

What's your favorite song?
Why don't you put it on the player?
Go ahead, but know this:
Someone else is gonna take it right off
And they're gonna change it to theirs—
That's the way things work;
That's the way things work out there.

How do you know you can trust?
You don't, and you would know that
If you ever listened to a good singer—
He would have told you, straight up
And you could trust him, you know
Cause what reason would he have
To tell you anything but the truth?

Your favorite song is the best song
I'll probably never ever hear—
It's a shame, it really is a shame
That some fucker can't let us have
The one song, the one song
That could bring us all together.

Where Do You Get Yours?

It's a wild world out there tonight
But I suppose it always is, ain't it?
The grime is extra thick though—
How come you can only see it clearly
When the bars and parties meet,
Making the streets as sloppy as the feet
That walk all over it and walk all over you?

What is it about these Northeast towns?
They can't like summer blockbusters?
They can't like blue-collar drinks?
I guess they like tongues in cheeks;
I guess they like motel Bibles too,
Cause they're kinda funny on coffee tables
You know, like from Ikea or something.

What do I know anyways, really?
I've never spent too much time
On a street named after someone famous
Or named after someone assassinated
Or one of those ones that change names
When they hit an intersection, you know?
Those are the ones that'll kill you.

Oh, but I've been beaten by peers in the country
And I've been beaten by an elder near home
And I've been beaten by strangers in cities, of sorts
And I've been beaten by things far greater, of course.
But it don't matter after a while
Cause there's God or drugs to help.

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